

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PASTURE

How Do I Love Thee

We supplement the hay/pasture/browse our llamas eat with a sweet grain mix. Over the past nine months there have been quality control problems in the production of the supplement. These problems were particularly bad last winter when an excess of molasses caused the bags to become 50-pound bricks. More recently the manufacturer has removed the expiration date from the bags so that it is no longer possible to determine the freshness of the supplement. While pondering these problems it occurred to me that I had not made the effort to communicate my concerns to the producer. I have now corrected this lapse.

If you use grain you might wish to communicate your appreciation or concerns to the producer. In matters such as these I have found that addressing one's concerns/kudos in a polite but direct manner to the office of the Chief Executive Officer is far more effective than going through customer service. Below are the addresses of two of the more prominent producers of llama feed in the GALA geographic area:

Agway, Inc.
P. O. Box 4933
Syracuse, NY 13221
e-mail: chairman@agway.com

Blue Seal Feeds, Inc.
P.O. Box 8000
Londonderry, NH 03053

We do our llamas a disservice when we do not take the time to communicate our appreciation or concern. One letter or e-mail may be ignored but an actively

communicating llama community will not be dismissed.

Ethics, Genetic Abnormalities and the Bottom Line

Recently one of our crias was diagnosed as having an ectopic ureter. We will be having this problem surgically corrected. It was recommended, and we concur, that the llama not be bred because the problem might be heritable. Last year we discovered that one of our llamas has an imperforate hymen. Because of our concern about heritability and an increased risk of dystocia we decided that this llama, too, should be a non-breeder.

Both llamas will most likely end up being permanent residents on our farm because we want to ensure that no attempt be made to breed them. Since both are otherwise healthy, we do not view euthanasia as an option. This will, of course, add to our overhead. We view it as part of the cost of doing business. But, we are reminded on an almost daily basis via the Internet of the large number of llamas of unknown heritage that are being acquired at low cost and bred because they are 'cute'. This results in even more llamas of questionable quality ending up in rescue or on the livestock auction block.

This, too, is a communications issue. We need to educate that portion of the market which consists of potential first time buyers about the value of a registry such as the ILR. We also need to take a look at how we personally deal with conditions that might be heritable. I know that some will disagree with our decision on the llama with an imperforate hymen. I would welcome an open discussion on the matter.